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ABSTRACT

This booklet explains the value of networking--a procedure for establishing connections, securing information, and making problem-solving bridges out of shared experiences of work. It advises looking for networking opportunities to discover career strategy techniques as well as to provide support and, perhaps, to find a new or better job. The booklet also describes the value of having a mentor; types of mentors; how a mentor relationship can be established; and how mentors support, challenge, and provide vision. A networking and mentor questionnaire are provided to help readers discern their attitudes toward and knowledge of networking and having a mentor. A list of 12 networks in Australia is provided, along with a bibliography listing 7 sources on networking, 3 sources for information on mentoring, and an additional sources for other information. (KC)

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HOW TO NETWORK and SELECT A MENTOR

PAUL STEVENS

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HOW TO NETWORK

and

SELECT A MENTOR

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HOW TO NETWORK

Career management training seminars that I have led throughout Australia and New Zealand over the past ten years have produced a frequent question from both female and male participants:

'What is networking? How do I use it to my advantage?'

Audible sighs from other participants in these seminars have indicated their knowledge of a practice in our society from which they have obviously already benefited.

As that most pragmatic of all feminist writers, Gloria Steinem, said in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions:* "Networking is becoming to this decade what consciousness-raising was to the last. It's a primary way women discover that we are not crazy, the system is."

The term 'networking' is a synonym for this decade for what has existed in many forms for men and women for centuries. In essence, it is a procedure for establishing connections, securing information and making problem-solving bridges out of shared experiences. It's a process, not an end in itself.

Networking helps you to maintain the initiative in your career management and in your job. It enhances your ability to act rather than react, to be the cause of events rather than the victim.

There are few who have not experienced the loneliness and fluctuating despondency of trying to resolve career-related issues. As you discover networking, you will be surprised how helpful and supportive others can be—even people you don't know well. Career strategy techniques which worked well for them could be useful for you, but you won't learn about them unless you talk to other people, until you decide to be less lonely.

Networks exist, formally and informally, in all companies, organisations and communities. They can be especially valuable to women, the physically handicapped, members of ethnic groups and those at the lower levels of the hierarchy of positions within organisations.

Unfortunately, optimum network conditions have yet to be reached, according to management consultant, Keith Stringer, from Coopers and Lybrand WD Scott. He said that men's conditioning was not yet complete; that there is still a strong prejudice against women which barred them from the male business cliques. He saw women's networks as the only alternative for women in an era when male-female networking was still in its early stages.

"To have equal opportunity, you have to have equal access to information, because information is power," Mr Stringer said. "Women's networking has only recently gathered momentum. There is still a long way to go, as they have started so far behind men who have been doing it—to their own rules—since day one."

Networks can lead you to the support and advice of others. You can identify those people within or outside your current employment environment who are competent as mentors, sponsors or role models and recruit them as information and resource aids.

Information you gather directly from people outweighs most of what you can find in printed material. It's the people who are doing, or have done, what you hope to accomplish who can tell you what it's really like, what obstacles need to be overcome and how to refine a strategy to achieve your aim.

Networking

- Increases skills and self-confidence in obtaining information.
- Demonstrates the personal quality of acting rather than waiting.
- Stimulates a thoughtful appraisal of realities and options.
- Builds referral base for further career explorations.
- Often uncovers actual job vacancies.

Networks

Women and Management, Women In Law, Women In Print, Women In Insurance, Women in Marketing, Women in Film and Television, Commercial Connections, graduate associations —these are examples of sources of help for those concerned about reducing their worklife risks and improving their personal career management. There are many more. In informal settings participants meet regularly, usually each month, to share concerns, information, strategies and to support each other in resolving worklife issues. That is their sole purpose. Rarely are these networks listed in the telephone directory. They are discovered by making enquiries of people in the relevant industry or profession.

One network meets for breakfast, another for lunch, others in the early evenings on weekdays. While of immense practical help to members and their guests, some networks do have the limitation that they are in the same line of business. Hence some value may be lost by not meeting others in complementary employment activities.

Networking is a highly practical activity. I have been a guest at a number of network meetings and have observed how little time is wasted on social preliminaries. Even before the meeting begins, members are engaged in networking among themselves. Otherwise privileged information is exchanged. Those seeking information about the profession or industry are quickly identified and 'informants' linked up. The participants are demonstrating vigorously that a satisfactory job and a satisfactory career depend on accurate information.

It is daunting for many women to enter bars, clubs and sporting fraternities because of sex stereotyping. Women's networks provide a non-threatening and supportive environment in which to share information and secure uncomplicated companionship while wrestling with a career action decision. I have not observed an equivalent readiness for strangers to declare their needs for information and have them readily met within men's networks such as Rotary, Lions and clubs of the 'old school' type.

Professional and industry associations can be an excellent arena for networking activities. Some associations are more aware of this benefit to members and their guests than others. Women

and Management, the Society of Business Communicators and the Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD) are some who specifically provide networking facilities.

At an AITD conference in Brisbane I attended, a large room was set aside and labelled 'Networking Forum'. Every participant and presenter was listed and attendees were encouraged to record against their names the people they wished to meet during the conference. One didn't need to wait for that old-fashioned inhibitor—the need to be introduced.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Career Development Network (a special interest group of the Australian Institute of Training and Development) is to expand human and business potential by questioning, discussing, researching, publishing, networking and self-developing in the field of career development in Australia and overseas.

To achieve this, the Career Development Network is committed to:

- developing a spirit of exchange and learning transfer and application in industry and society;
- developing a close working relationship with the community, business and professional associations with a view to promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of career development application;
- enhancing the profile of career development;
- the active growth of career development learning, discovery and research.

Objects of New Zealand MBA Association
(Extract)

'. . . to improve services for members
by mailing to them information
concerning selected vacancies . . .'

So, networking is a career management skill too potentially powerful to ignore. To access it, decide on the subject areas you need to know about; then resolve to locate the appropriate network and obtain the benefits.

Your Networking Ability

I have little idea of how NETWORKING can uncover information about employment opportunities. I am uncertain about how to proceed to increase substantially the quality and usefulness of people I know and secure discussions with people **they** know.	Some of my contacts could lead me to potentially useful information within a short time of my request. But, to expand my options NETWORKING is required and I know where to initiate it, but still feel apprehensive about the process.	NETWORKING has benefited me in the past and I am proficient at it. To develop many useful contacts leading to useful data presents no problem to me, other than making time to carry it out.
Tick appropriate box ✔		
FAIR ❑	SATISFACTORY ❑	VERY GOOD ❑

Create your own network

Networking is about establishing channels to information and communication. Some people are not waiting for their professional associations to initiate networking facilities but are forming their own. To initiate networking as a beneficial process, you do need to place yourself in the company of others with the potential to provide the nature of data and support you want.

The people you know already and people you meet for the first time form an extensive network. These people know other people. Each has his or her own set of friends and acquaintances.

Assemble a list of names and don't be hesitant in advising them of your search for information. Shyness about revealing to others a need for information and advice is a major cause of worklife unhappiness.

There are many people who may be able to help whom you could easily overlook. To prevent this, use the following 'People I know' prompting list.

List your father, mother, all your sisters and brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Include your spouse, partner, girlfriend or boyfriend, and their relatives.

Ask your relatives, family friends, doctor, dentist, accountant, solicitor, local Chamber of Commerce representative, friends in your sport and social activities, and your local Council Community Services Officer for the names of people they know, their occupations and where to contact them.

List all your former classmates, teachers and lecturers that you can recall from high school, college or university. Thinking about the clubs you have belonged to may help you remember. Listing people who did the same course as you in college or university can be particularly beneficial, because these people may be able to give you recommendations, job leads or arrange interviews because of their daily contacts in their employment.

List all your past and present flatmates. These were probably close friends and would not feel imposed upon when asked for their help.

Include in the list significant contacts inside and outside the organisation where you work: your subordinates, boss, peers, clients, close friends, professional associates. The list should include people who care about you, people who will need to support your eventual decision with their own actions, people in positions of significant authority or influence, people who have expertise in helping others look at their careers. How many you list depends on the number who might actually be helpful, your investment in the project, the time you have available and the time they have available. By omitting names, though, you could be short-changing yourself.

When that list of people is assembled and extended by the names of new contacts, don't be hesitant about sending them a résumé. You need to let them know what you are capable of and the achievements you have accumulated over past years. Even your closest friends will not be completely familiar with the capabilities and successes of your employment record—they like you for other reasons.

Do not allow pride to inhibit your networking. When you ask others for assistance, you make them feel good. Even if some are not able to meet your needs, they feel closer to you because you chose to approach them.

Your Inventory of Friends and Acquaintances	
Name	**How This Person May Help**
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Networking preparation

Write down the questions you want your networking prospects to answer. You are going to be interviewing each of them and want to make sure that you ask each person to consider the same points, each from their own perspective. You will probably end up with a handful of questions, each rather open-ended, leaving room for them to make their own unique response. The questions might be preceded with an introduction that sounds like this: 'Because I am in the process of rethinking my role and responsibilities here at ABC Company I want your help. I am talking to a number of people important to me in performance of this job and asking each of them a few questions. After I have talked to everybody, I will put those ideas together with my own and write up a description of how I think my career should be approached in the future. I will talk with you about that; ask for

your refinements to it; and ask for your active support for what I eventually decide upon. How does that sound to you?'

Networking functions because of a very basic characteristic of human behaviour. People enjoy giving advice when they are not placed in a threatening relationship to the questioner. Many a busy person will gladly respond to a short note asking for an opportunity to meet them when the purpose is clearly stated.

So a polite but unambiguous letter can be sent to potential information providers in cases where you have not received a personal introduction. The following style is recommended:

Sample letter 1

Dear

I am currently involved in researching information regarding a career in _____ . I have learnt that you are a person who could provide helpful insight into the nature of the profession and the actual rewards and difficulties.

I would appreciate very much a few moments of your time. Please telephone me on _____ when convenient to your schedule.

Yours sincerely

Sample letter 2

Dear

I am confidentially exploring new employment opportunities in the field of _____ and believe you might be interested in assisting me.

I am hoping that you will have contact with or advice about employers to whom my particular skills and capabilities will appeal.

Please call me on _____ to answer any questions you may have or to arrange a meeting between us.

Yours sincerely

Your quest is for both positive and negative information in order to progress to decision making on a proposed career action step. Also, you need to contemplate the information secured by evaluating it in terms of its meaning to you personally, rather than to the person providing it.

Sample letter 3

Dear

A few moments with you could benefit me immensely. Your industry could be the one most likely to make the best use of my skills. An appreciation of the problems which you experience in this field could help me validate whether this career direction is appropriate for me.

I've prepared well for such a discussion and won't take up more than twenty minutes of your time.

If it is convenient for you to see me, please call me on _____ any day before noon.

Yours sincerely

Check out your employer's facilities

Some employers are acknowledging the value of assisting networking. One method is by broadcasting a list of staff who have volunteered to act as mentors from which employees choose whom to approach directly. Another method is by creating special interest networks where those who participate discuss issues, some of which develop into recommendations and/or requests for resources passed on to the Human Resource Department.

It could be worthwhile checking whether similar facilities exist within your employment environment—or suggesting they be introduced.

'If you are on the market, send a brief résumé to SBC News. Many jobs in our profession are gained through contacts such as the SBC provides.'

(Society of Business Communicators, NEWSLETTER)

Networking effectiveness

Anne Gorman, in her book *Going Places,* (Allen & Unwin, 1987) provides a caution that should not be ignored. Anne places considerable emphasis on the strategic thinking and energy which need to be applied.

> Firstly, many people, unconsciously trapped in tightly knit networks, will pass their entire lives feeling psychologically comfortable and well-supported by acquaintances, colleagues and friends but never really getting things done. They can't. They are locked into particular avenues and limited opportunities as surely as if they were locked in jail.
>
> Sadly, very few can recognise how their development or their organisation's development is stifled because they feel so comfortable. Tightly knit personal networks tend to support what people already believe, and are therefore comfortable and easy to live with but highly insidious. They often serve to mask even the beginnings of recognition of these constraints or genuine alternatives and real opportunities.
>
> Secondly, many people who are locked out, though on the edge of tightly knit groups and communities, want with all their hearts to be embraced (even suffocated) in a tightly knit personal network; to be one of the in crowd, one of the mob. There are ways of being one of the mob, but still not getting trapped in the relationships so that creative activity is impeded.
>
> Thirdly, many people struggle through much of their lives to build a 'community of interest', to pull people together from disparate backgrounds to work or to play together, to build a tightly knit organisation, association or community (these days, probably called a network).
>
> How does one do this?
>
> Some of these people will be locked in and therefore also constrained in their opportunities for contribution and development. Either way, the actual networks people have evolved must be examined before determining how things should change to improve the chances of forming the right 'community of interest'.

A further word of caution! Networking is about sharing information and helping one another. So, integrity over the data shared and its sources must be honoured or that essential element of trust between adviser and information-seeker will be broken.

Also, it is human nature to want to meet expectations for information, companionship and counsel. If the person with whom you are conversing is not the appropriate one, ask for a referral to another potential source.

Value of networking

Talking to other people is a useful activity and far better than the agony of waiting alone for the answer to your difficulty to appear. Other people can often provide different viewpoints on your problem. Approaching others can be like jumping into cold water the first time—it's not easy to admit that you are having difficulties. But once you do, you have started to communicate and the chances of finding a solution and restoring your morale are improved.

If you are not experiencing this dilemma, spare some time for someone you know who is looking for answers. Whether family member, friend, acquaintance or stranger, by contacting them you could be providing the critical nudge over the hurdle. Your gesture could break the paralysis of inaction that so many experience.

Talking about problems is an essential step before one can move forward again towards one's goal in employment activities. You never know, you may make a new friend of someone who was just an acquaintance. It is not much to ask—you might need this kind of support yourself one day.

It definitely helps to talk things over. Sometimes, just talking about a problem out loud helps to clarify it, and a sympathetic listener can be enormously supportive.

A few hours a month of networking can let us know that we are not alone and affirm a new reality from what previously may have appeared denied to us.

Now that you have read and thought about the potential value for you to participate in networking, record here what you intend to do about developing this personal career management skill:

'A job market is held at the end of each meeting. This is an opportunity for members who are looking for jobs to let others know and for those who know of vacancies to inform people. If you need help or you know of an opportunity that might be of interest to one of our members, please come along and let us know or if you cannot make the meeting, then let a committee member know about it.'

(Women and Management, NEWSLETTER)

SELECTING A COACH, MENTOR, SPONSOR OR ROLE MODEL

Managing your career is about planning ahead. It sets you apart from others who are merely waiting for events to happen to them. It is more productive than drifting or delaying action until the job happiness fairy comes along. It may never arrive!

How to build bridges across organisational lines and form career-help friendship networks are two of the areas a career-wise person needs to know about in order to survive, as well as to advance their career development.

To succeed because of what you have done, and can do, rather than as a token of length of service or seniority requires the counsel of others who have already pioneered the route through the quicksands of organisational life. Gail Sheehy, author of *Pathfinders*, names such people as 'Polestars and Survivor Guides'.

The need for gathering information through consultation with others has never been so urgent as when you are intent on being more in charge of your worklife direction.

Do pause now to rate yourself on:

Information Gathering

I know some sources of information about careers. But time spent gathering more information would delay my career planning and irritate me.	Gathering information can improve my targeting of specific occupation, industry, employer and hiring decision-maker. I know of a few appropriate sources of this information but am sure there are others to be discovered. But, how can I find them with limited time to spare?	I know how to obtain all the information likely to help me. I know how to approach strangers in person and by correspondence to secure this data which could lead to identifying several career opportunities.
Tick appropriate box ✔		
FAIR ❑	SATISFACTORY ❑	VERY GOOD ❑

Organisation culture

Employment environments are social systems in the same way that families, professional associations and clubs are. Each has a particular culture, an expectation of certain forms of behaviour, a continual change in individuals' loyalty to others, or their lack of it. You need to ascertain, pin down and define the unwritten rules before you can implement effective career strategy which benefits, rather than stultifies, your quest.

Every employment environment has a distinct culture. The career-wise person acknowledges this fact and seeks out an older person with longer employment service to help with this diagnosis. An organisation's culture dictates what is appropriate behaviour and what is not. This influences the way each employee will act towards another; what will be praised and what condemned.

The culture of a chartered accountancy practice, for example, will contrast considerably with that of a credit card company, or an advertising agency, or a computer software consultancy. Even each Department within the Public Sector has culture-dictated idiosyncrasies regarding the unwritten norms of personal conduct and permissible self-advancement strategies.

Sample Introduction

I'm making a study of career paths and I'm speaking to a number of people as preparation for my decision making. I'd appreciate your time to contribute your experiences.

Need for role models

As you accelerate your career within the organisational hierarchy you are likely to need to find pathfinders of the same sex in higher positions. If ambitious and intent on upward mobility, you need a 'sounding-board' or role model you can go to for advice and to discuss your career enhancement strategy.

You cannot progress in your career simply by reading Personnel Procedure Manuals, induction booklets, organisation charts or by socialising at the staff Friday evening get-together. No longer is it a general pattern that promotions are 'fixed' at the pub after

work. The world of work has become more subtle and also confused.

Value of a coach and mentor

While busy solving a series of problems or carrying out the responsibilities of a challenging position, it is difficult to observe ourselves and evaluate our performance objectively. What might appear to us correct behaviour for our career progress may not be compatible with the views or expectations of management. Our efforts in one direction when viewed in the totality of our overall career goals may be just treading water rather than a contribution to our personal advancement and inner well-being.

When working hard to advance a career the need for someone to talk with about our feelings and behaviour often arises. In most cases, we would feel inhibited talking to our boss because of a natural reluctance to share too much of ourselves with a person who represents the power to advance or suppress our career ambitions.

We all need help from another person to bring out our best performance. A person with whom we can share our hopes and disappointments in an unfettered way, who can review the proposed next step in our personal career management program.

I have often seen people resign from their employer for emotional reasons rather than after the calm, structured evaluation which concludes that resignation is the most appropriate action to take. A coach and mentor can prevent impulse over-ruling logic.

A good coach is regarded as essential to improving the performance of an athlete. The value of coaches is that they are not directly involved in the activity. Coaches can observe the performance and identify the critical areas requiring refinement. The next step is to provide feedback to the athlete in a manner that brings about a change in behaviour and improvement in the result.

The coach and mentor you select should be a person you can trust—someone with whom you can be open and who is willing to be frank with you. Remember, you are not necessarily looking

for a friend. You are seeking another person as a counsellor who will help you manage your own career rather than you leaving it to chance.

A client of mine successfully located a mentor and, after several 'research' discussions, identified a significant factor in maturing her attitude towards her proposed career path. She concluded: "It's not that hard to do what men do. Basically, it's overrated." By that she meant that women too can use their equivalent of the 'schoolboy network' or 'buddy system'.

Mentor Types

- A **Guide** to the culture of the organisation such as company values, politics and informal networks.
- A **Counsellor** to help reduce anxiety through sharing their own experience and perspective on your worklife experiences.
- A **Teacher** of business or technical expertise.
- A **Behaviour model** or example of the ways you can accomplish significant tasks.

Help with transitions

A mentor is someone we feel drawn to from whom we can learn. When we are faced with a decision concerning our careers and behaviour at work we are commencing a new transition. A transition requires us to identify the options, select one appropriate to our particular circumstances and move purposely to implement the steps to bring the transition to a successful conclusion. We may need to change mentors when the nature of career transition differs. A person able to advise us on one issue may not be suitable for a different transition.

A good mentor will help you to see not only the options and tasks before you but also the broader context that gives those tasks meaning. Having a mentor is not a passive process of just listening to advice. You need to question, debate, submit proposals and prepare for discussions with your mentor. Unless you do, your mentor cannot help with three distinct types of

assistance. These are to support, to challenge and to provide vision.

Critical Information Needs		
Occupation Reality	→	What is it?
Labour Market Demand	→	Will it suit me today? next year?
Lifestyle Integration	→	Will it fit with my non-worklife needs?

Mentors support, challenge and provide vision

While **supporting** us mentors show that they have empathy with our problem and personal situation. They listen, inspire trust over what we are sharing and help us define the boundaries within which decisions are to be made. Their role as **challengers** to our ideas is to introduce contradictory views, question the basis of our opinions and perspective of the problem. They may sometimes decline to answer our questions directly in the best interests of helping us.

As we progress through to the stage of **vision** being provided, the mentor reassures us that the career transition can be made, helps us define what will signify success and provides an insight as to the potential rewards for the resolution of our particular dilemma.

A good mentor is not there to provide the answers but to assist us develop our skills at resolving career-related complications. To demand 'Which way should I go?' is improper use of a mentor relationship.

As you develop a relationship with your mentor, use the following checklist to guide your expectations of their behaviour. A good mentor provides:

Support by

- Listening
- Providing structure
- Expressing positive expectations—assisting self-confidence

- Serving as an advocate—sometimes talking with others on our behalf
- Sharing information about themselves
- Making it special—the relationship is one both value highly

Challenge by

- Setting tasks—so that we gain insight from carrying them out
- Engaging in discussion—talking so that different ways of viewing a problem emerge
- Providing opposite perspectives—so that we consider each perspective, evaluate many aspects before we decide on an option
- Setting high standards—helping construct positive self-fulfilling prophesies, aims and expectations which are high, but achievable even though with difficulty

Vision by

- Modelling—by this is meant providing a description of what we are trying to become
- Describing a map—helping to form a comprehensive picture of our present lives and articulate and plan for accomplishment of reasonable and attainable life goals
- Providing a mirror—extending our self-awareness, to see ourselves in new ways

Mentors' limitations

Your mentor, whether an employee of the same organisation or external to your employment environment, needs to remind themselves constantly that their proper role is as your facilitator. The temptation to tell you what to do, based on their knowledge and experiences, must be resisted. Advice should provide a framework for you to decide on your own action and manner of implementing it.

Mentor Relationship Stages

1. Initiation of contact and getting to know each other.
2. Exploring the nature of the relationship and topics for discussion.
3. Testing the strengths and limits of the relationship to see what reactions follow.
4. Stabilising of the relationship as each settles for what they can expect from each other.
5. Changes in information and counselling needs cause reassessment of the relationship and, sometimes, its termination.

Help from acquaintances and strangers

One of the more endearing features of my worklife is the willingness of past clients to volunteer to be helpers to 'strangers'. Consequently, I maintain a referral list of people who are prepared to give their time in such a thoughtful and unselfish manner.

We all know the value of impartial counsel when we are grappling with personal decisions. We also know we are unlikely to find impartiality in those who love us. Their support for us comes in other forms. Hence, when I match one of my volunteer mentors with a client they do not need to know anything other than what is shared.

I have found that this procedure is an important feature of career transition support work, and this is not surprising. Our heritage of literature provides many expressions of this form of companionship. My favourite is by George Eliot, the pseudonym for Mary Ann Evans—"Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort, of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out, just as it is, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful ally will take and sift them, keeping what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness, blowing the rest away."

One client recently expressed this to me in another way:

> I don't need pressure to proceed; I generate my own. What I do need is positive feedback and intelligent questioning with the implicit sense of being valued this involves.

The pleasure of helping

Mentoring involves its own special difficulties and challenges. The considerable amount of information acquired, analysed and used, the limitations of each person's situation, their fluctuating morale, occasional setbacks and slow progress. Nevertheless, mentors help make dreams happen. Mentors restore flagging spirits and are privileged to observe the emerging resilience of people grappling with emotional pain. Concurrently, mentors strive to improve the manner of their support, to note where successful approaches occur and where enhancements to style and methods of providing support can be made.

Finding a sponsor

A further useful career strategy, in addition to networking and recruiting a mentor, is sponsorship. A sponsor is a person who perceives some value in helping advance your career. Good sponsors can be very useful. They can say things about you to those in power that you cannot say for yourself.

A sponsor is usually well connected among the decision-makers within your employment environment, professional circle or industry.

Many just like helping others when talent is shown. Some sponsors enjoy the reflected regard of others when someone they have sponsored succeeds.

Your role in such a relationship is first to be sure that the motives of the sponsor are honourable—that their involvement is related to your competencies, not other aspects of you. You need to communicate what you seek and why you merit it. You need to return allegiance and support to your sponsor. When a particular career move has been facilitated, don't abandon

loyalty to your sponsor even though the support may no longer be required.

Who are these sponsors? They could be a lecturer at a part-time study course, a friend of the family network, a chance acquaintance on a business or vacation journey or a committee member of your professional association. Sponsors can also be fellow employees but are usually in higher positions than you currently occupy. They are rarely your boss, or your boss's—they often have more interest in helping themselves.

A Mentor	A Sponsor
teaches	opens doors
helps by listening	helps you do it
suggests	introduces
serves as advocate	has influence
imparts confidence	tells you what to do

The credentials of your adviser

What credentials should you seek in your sponsor, coach and mentor or role model? Essentially, they should be:

- from five to ten years older;
- people capable of providing some guiding principles and endorsing your overall goal;
- capable of engendering your trust;
- able to be critical;
- predisposed to talk about you more than about themselves.

To commit your personal thoughts to another in anticipation of constructive advice requires your confidence in the skill, knowledge and ethics of your counsellor. You must be sure that they have these credentials to help you before you start communicating. The relationship must be reciprocal to be sustained. You must, by your subsequent actions, reflect your sponsor's own qualities, contribute to their need for self-esteem

and communicate pleasure in the sharing of wisdom. The adviser must facilitate the development of your own decisions—not dictate your actions. In turn, you need to prepare draft proposals to assist in this style of relationship. And do not retreat, or express surprise, when your adviser seeks your opinion of a career-related action being planned.

Rewards!

A shortage of role models, sponsors, coaches and mentors is not a good reason to hold back on your risk taking. The sheer excitement of feeling you are the driver of your worklife direction, not just the passenger, should be your aim when you embark on resolving to **initiate** career advancement actions.

If you don't like this prospect or have tired of the game-playing, then you need to create self-employment opportunities as I have—an alternative in which I have found considerable fulfilment, experienced both triumph and disappointment. But then, that's living—not just waiting for others to deal the cards from the worklife pack.

The results that you can expect from identifying persons who can be your role model, mentor, coach or sponsor are:

- Real learning and behavioural/attitude change take place within you.

- It is an extremely effective check on the selection of your next career advancement strategy.

- Self-protection. By itself, this is sufficient argument that you should follow the procedures I have recommended.

Misunderstandings

Whether the relationship with your mentor is short or lasts a long time, it should never be one of dependency. It is a relationship for **mutual** planning and **mutual** negotiation. As you both focus on one or more worklife problems you have raised, your mentor advises you and makes recommendations. You should not, however, abdicate your responsibility for making your own resolutions and deciding to act in your own

particular way. It's your worklife. It's you who must implement the decisions. Your mentor suggests, checks your reasoning and provides encouragement.

It is **not** essential for both to have similar personality and backgrounds for a mentor relationship to be successful. But if you share similar values, attitudes and sometimes spiritual views the relationship is likely to be more effective.

Your aim should be not to please, but to learn from your mentor; not to avoid questions, but to ask them; not to hide mistakes, but to discuss what can be learned from them; not to conceal information, but to share it; not to be protected, but to be encouraged to take new risks.

To avoid misunderstandings, make your expectations explicit. Let your needs be known. Let your mentor know how the relationship is meeting your needs. Share what you are feeling and why.

Choosing the timing for a mentor relationship is your responsibility. It is likely to occur during the major transitions in your worklife, such as the stages of:

- Career Awareness
- Career Preparation
- Career Orientation
- Career Expansion
- Career Advancement

Choose from the following two pages **which stage** of career transition you are currently experiencing. Mark the relevant stage and consider what action to identify an appropriate mentor is suggested.

Major Transitions in Worklife Where Mentors Are Useful

Career Awareness

Support and information needs

You may be about to:

- choose an educational institution for study
- accept a new job offer
- establish a small business
- change careers or relocate.

Mentors can help you consider the realities ahead so that an informed selection can be made.

Source of mentors:

Tertiary education lecturers, former students, employment agency consultants, small business advisory service, career counsellors, Chambers of Commerce.

Career Preparation

Support and information needs

You have selected your career transition direction. Adjusting to new learning and new environments is often difficult. A mentor can help you to:

- assess tutoring, counselling services or more experienced students **(as a student)**
- find out about the employer information which cannot be learned by carrying out job tasks **(as a new employee)**

Source of mentors:

Personnel staff, designated mentors provided by the employer, work colleagues, your manager.

Career Orientation

Support and information needs

Making the transition into meaningful work and securing the cooperation of work colleagues requires intuitive solutions to immediate problems. To become competent you need to do more than apply your knowledge to the job. You must earn the right to feel welcomed and respected. Mentors can assist your understanding of the employer's culture, the norms of behaviour, how to obtain help from others.

Source of mentors:

Professional associations, human resource personnel, employees with longer service.

Career Expansion

Support and information needs

At intervals you should consider your career path options. Frequently the scarcity of information restricts a comprehensive evaluation of alternatives. Mentors can help provide this information or recommend sources where it can be found. Their advice can facilitate:

- preparation of your development plans for self-development
- expansion of your talent
- improvement of your eligibility for consideration

Source of mentors:

Subject area interest groups, proven professionals, acquaintances in the same industry.

Career Advancement

Support and information needs

How and to whom you should present your case for what you seek and why you merit it are support and information needs at this career stage. Those who have traversed it represent the best source of mentors with whom strategies, documentation and communication methods can be discussed. You seek their counsel for a specified utilitarian purpose.

Source of mentors:

Your manager, personnel staff, senior members of your profession who work for other employers, successful role models, executives, Institutes of Management.

Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire about your understanding of using **NETWORKING** and a **MENTOR** as important career management skills.

Circle the number you consider the most accurate:

1 = Strongly agree
2 = Agree
3 = Maybe, not certain
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly disagree

Networking means talking only to important people who have senior jobs 1 2 3 4 5

I maintain a list of useful contacts and acquaintances to help me in readiness for when I need to network for information 1 2 3 4 5

People who don't have what it takes for their positions are more inclined to avoid networking 1 2 3 4 5

Career pathfinding is different to networking 1 2 3 4 5

I participate in the activities of my professional association 1 2 3 4 5

I send Christmas cards to my business contacts 1 2 3 4 5

A mentor must not be the same sex as the seeker of assistance 1 2 3 4 5

Both men and women are increasingly finding it helpful to use mentors in their careers 1 2 3 4 5

The age of the mentor does not matter 1 2 3 4 5

It is ethical to change mentors if you believe there are no longer benefits 1 2 3 4 5

It is okay to have a mentor who works for the same employer 1 2 3 4 5

Usually the higher the mentor's position the more the mentor can do for you 1 2 3 4 5

The relationship between a male mentor and a woman can be more complex than a woman to woman relationship	1 2 3 4 5
A counsellor can also serve as a mentor	1 2 3 4 5
When you have a tough problem to resolve you should involve your mentor	1 2 3 4 5
Your mentor does not have to have the same personality traits as yourself	1 2 3 4 5
The best mentor has a wide range of current skills to pass on	1 2 3 4 5
A mentor provides more than friendship	1 2 3 4 5
The primary purpose of a mentor is to be a transitional figure in your personal development	1 2 3 4 5

Now, select a mentor, recruit their assistance and discuss with them your responses to this questionnaire.

Alternatively, if you are using this publication during a training course, discuss your responses with a colleague also participating in the training.

Networks—a representative sample

While the networks listed here are given in good faith that they are accurate, it is not possible to guarantee all the information provided. Office bearers, their phone numbers, and secretariat offices change with bewildering frequency. To locate other sources of networks and special interest groups, contact the local branch of your industry or professional association.

APS Career Development Network
Tel: (06) 266.8602
Contact: Peter Sullivan

Commercial Connections
PO Box 1200
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057
Tel: (02) 411.6222
Contact: Gillian Chadwick

Human Development Network
GPO Box 1792
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Tel: (02) 558.8508
Contact: Richard Maguire

International Management Network (AIM)
Tel: (02) 953.9450
Contact: Karen Huchendorf

The Mentor Scheme for Women
32 St George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
Tel: (09) 421.1699
Contact: Lindy Temple

New Enterprise Scheme
6th Floor
81 St George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
Tel: (09) 426.8888
Contact: The Coordinator

Women & Management
PO Box 647
ARTARMON NSW 2064
Tel: (02) 411.5906
Contact: Maureen Downs

Women in Film & Television
PO Box 648
BROADWAY NSW 2007
Tel: (02) 969.1283
Contact: Libby Sommer

Women In Insurance
GPO Box 3635
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Tel: (02) 231.5166
Contact: Robyn Hartley

Women in Management
c/- Australian Institute of Management
PO Box 195
WEMBLEY WA 6014
Tel: (09) 387.7788
Contact: The President

Women in Publishing
308 Victoria Street
BRUNSWICK VIC 3056

Women in Science Enquiry Network (WISENET)
GPO Box 452
CANBERRA ACT 2601
(06) 249.3871 or (06) 245.9583
Contact: Caroline Gill

Bibliography and recommended further reading

(i) How to network

Boe, Anne and Young, Bettie. *Is Your 'Net' Working?: A Complete Guide to Building Contacts and Career Visibility,* John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1989.

Dayhoff, Signe A. *Create Your Own Career Opportunities,* Brick House Publishing Co, Andover, USA, 1987.

Galloway, John and Gorman, Anne. *Going Places: How to Network Your Way to Personal Success,* Social Impacts, Sydney, 1987.

Heald, Tim. *Networks: Who We Know and How We Use Them,* Coronet, London, 1983.

Potter, Beverly A. *Maverick Career Strategies: The Way of the Ronin,* AMACOM, New York, 1986.

Rogers, Barbara. *Men Only: An Investigation into Men's Organisations,* Pandora, London, 1988.

Stevens, Paul. *Career Transitions,* The Centre for Worklife Counselling, Sydney, 1990.

(ii) Selecting a coach, mentor, sponsor or role model

Clutterbuck, David. *Everyone Needs a Mentor: How to Foster Talent within the Organization,* Institute of Personnel Management (UK), 1985.

Kram, K.E. *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life,* Scott, Foreman & Co., Glenview, Illinois, 1985.

Stevens, Paul. *Stop Postponing the Rest of Your Life,* The Centre for Worklife Counselling, Sydney, 1991.

(iii) Useful further information source

Mentoring International, a journal published by International Centre for Mentoring, Suite 510 - 1200 West Pender Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6E 2S9. Contact: William A Gray or Marilynne Gray. Tel: (604) 684.4134.

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The Centre for Worklife Counselling
Suite One, 120-122 Prince Albert Street
Mosman Junction, NSW 2088, Australia
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How to Network and Select a Mentor

The term 'networking' is a synonym now used for what has existed in many forms for centuries. It's a procedure for establishing connections, securing information and making problem-solving bridges out of shared experiences. As you discover networking, you will be surprised how helpful and supportive others can be—even people you don't know well. Career strategy techniques which worked well for them could be useful for you, but you won't learn about them unless you talk to other people. This book shows you how.

About the Author — Paul Stevens

After twenty-one years' employment experience as a Personnel Manager dealing with the problems of employer/employee relationships in the UK, Canada and Australia, Paul Stevens created The Centre for Worklife Counselling in 1980. His concern for individuals and their search for satisfaction in their work motivates his daily counselling and teaching activities, as well as his writing.

Paul has become nationally known as a counsellor, broadcaster and author of twenty-one publications on worklife and career management issues.

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